



## **The One After El Saved the World by VintageInkBlot**

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# The One After El Saved the World

## *The One After El Saved the World*

### Mike/Eleven

**Summary:** *Mike's thoughts are swimming with El. Did she survive? Did she die to close the gate? How could he live in a world without her- again? A look through Mike's eyes during the hours after El saves the world, glimpsing the stories of the rest of the group but eagerly awaiting his reunion with El.*

**Note:** Hi everyone! So, I've been sitting on this story for a while. I started writing this short one-shot over a year ago to satisfy my need to see how the rest of the evening progressed after El saved the world in Season 2. I was nervous to post it as this would be my first published fanfiction. But I figured the night before Season 3 would be my final moment to get this out into the world. I know there has been many versions of this written but I just had to put my own idea into the ring as well. I would appreciate your constructive feedback, but please be kind! Here's hoping you enjoy! :)

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Mike sat on the couch facing the front windows of the Byer's living room, leg bobbing up and down with anxiety. They had successfully called away the dogs...Demogorgon dogs...demo-dogs, whatever, from the lab and now they all sat in the Byer's house waiting. The broken front window was wafting autumnal night air into the living room but Mike was covered in sweat. Upside Down dust was clinging to his clothes and it felt like it was clinging to the inside of his lungs too. The plaid scarf that he had been wearing as a filter still hung around his neck and had helped protect him, but not completely. He coughed lightly and shook his head as images flashed through his brain. Just a few hours ago, he had seen her, he had seen El. She had walked through that door looking powerful and even more beautiful than before- if that was even possible. But it was possible. She had slicked back her hair that had grown out longer than he had imagined and her eyes were so vivid, contrasted by dark makeup that was correctly applied compared to his mediocre attempts a year ago. She looked so much older, taller, and full of confidence. His heart

was racing now just thinking about her standing before him, locking his gaze. She didn't even need to speak to tell him how she felt about him, the smile that had spread across her face had said it all. Even now it made warmth spread through his entire body like a wave.

His face reddened as he remembered how good it was to hug her, to feel her solid and alive in his arms. How the excitement had rushed through them both like electricity. He hadn't felt embarrassed in the moment even though nearly everyone he knew was watching them. Everything had faded away and it was just them, together, like it was supposed to be. It was weird, he knew, to be so young and feel so much; to know in your gut that you belonged with someone. If he shared how he truly felt about Eleven with any of the other boys in his class, they would probably laugh him off or get him help. All year, when El was gone, he had been casually observing how other boys his age interacted with girls. Everyone was starting to like someone else in his grade and many of the boys in his classes had had girlfriends this last year. Most of the time the boys just joked with each other about kissing or how close they could get to a girl. Some of the boys who talked big about all of the stuff they had done with girls mocked other boys who were "less experienced". Mike knew it was all bullshit. He doubted any of them had done much of anything.

But he did notice that they rarely talked about girls as friends. They never talked about what girls liked, what they did or anything really meaningful. At least not out loud to the other boys in school. Maybe it was because of his mom, his sister, his friends or just going through a life or death situation with El, but he knew he never wanted to act like that. El wasn't just beautiful; she was amazing, smart, and so strong. Everything felt right when they were together. She would look him in the eyes and he felt understood. She was on his side and he was on hers, no matter what happened. Now that Mike thought about it, he couldn't care less if he was the one thirteen-year-old in the world who found his match because-damn it-he felt so lucky he could burst. Just as long as she makes it back. The thought crashed through his mind and smacked him back into reality. His leg started jiggling more than ever as he tried to push away the fear that she hadn't made it. He knew she had closed the gate but was she alive? The sinking feeling in his stomach started to grow again so he looked

up from his feet and tried to focus on anything else.

Lucas and Max were sitting across from him, on the couch in front of the windows, talking quietly. They were sitting close together, softly holding hands as if they weren't sure they were doing it right. Mike hadn't really noticed this new development until now. Dustin and Lucas had both been poorly attempting to win Max's heart for the last few months but Mike just assumed Max wasn't that interested in either. Now it seemed almost decided and Mike had missed the whole thing. Although he hadn't been happy about Max joining the party at first, she had proved herself to be smart, strong, and a quick thinker on a tough day like today. Traits that Lucas himself embodied and prized. Actually, it made sense that they liked each other now that he took a moment to think about it. He watched Lucas softly rub her hand in his and how she looked up into his eyes and smiled warmly in response. He could tell that they were still shy with each other but there was definite chemistry between them. It reminded him of how it felt when he first started liking El. How nervous but excited he was just to be around her. Would he be able to be around her again? Mike jolted up and started pacing again to try and calm himself. He didn't know anything yet, she could be fine. She would be fine, he told himself firmly.

As he was pacing on the living room rug, he glanced over and noticed that Dustin and Steve were sitting in the kitchen. They were occasionally chatting but mainly just sitting silently drinking from cans of Pepsi. Dustin would get up periodically to open the refrigerator door and stare wonderingly at his dead demo dog stashed inside before returning to sipping his soda. Mike saw from the corner of his eye that once he even reached out to stroke it but Steve cleared his throat forcefully to stop him just in time. Another thing Mike had missed was the sudden friendship between Steve and Dustin and this one was honestly more surprising than Max and Lucas. Mike thought Dustin was cool even if he did have an odd obsession with taking in dangerous pets but was he cool enough to be hanging with a senior in high school? He had been surprised his sister had been cool enough to be honest. Never mind that a year ago, Steve was a complete jerk face. Mike paused in his pacing. Steve was drastically cooler now than he had ever been as a high school bully, at least to Mike and the gang. Mike realized, it must have had a lot to do with his sister.

A smirk quietly crept across Mike's face. He felt a tad proud of his sister even though he would never admit it to her face. She was forceful and positive, even when things were not going well. Last year, she had lost herself in trying to be like the popular crowd. Even Mike and his friends had seen her change from someone who would join them in their adventures to someone who couldn't be seen with them. But ever since Barb died and they had all almost died last year, she had stopped worrying about what Steve and his crowd would think and started being herself again. Steve, despite his reputation and outward persona, accepted her and tried to become a better person because of who she was.

It reminded Mike of how El made him feel. Even in their short time together last year, Eleven had changed him. Even in the year of her absence, she continued to change him. He only wanted to help her, keep her safe, and be her friend. If that meant he needed to be a better person for her, than he was willing to do whatever it took to change. Of course, Mike couldn't keep her safe completely. She was her own independent individual and was much more powerful now than ever before. He just continued to hope she was ok. No matter what, he would never stop worrying about her or wanting her to be ok.

The fear of living in a world without El rose up in his belly, threatening to break his heart to pieces. So, Mike quickly turned his thoughts back to thinking about Steve's love life. Something had happened between Steve and his sister. Actually, he knew what had happened. Or more accurately, who had happened. Nancy became someone she had always been but that person actually belonged with someone else. Poor Steve, even Mike could see his sister belonged with Jonathan. They just fit together naturally and that's something you can't ignore. Mike knew that all too well. He groaned audibly as his thoughts drifted towards El again. He pulled them back to the Dustin and Steve curiosity. Steve and Dustin must have connected when everyone else was running around. They had been the odd ones out of the groups these last few weeks. Mike had just been so distracted and angry, he had missed most of everything. Subconsciously he picked up on some things but otherwise, he has just had tunnel vision. Just totally focused on one thing—

"MIKE!" A voice yelled and Mike stopped his pacing to look directly up into the face of Lucas. "Stop pacing! My god, you're making me nervous." Lucas said. Mike realized that he had been so consumed with his thoughts that he would have run straight into Lucas if he hadn't shouted at him.

"Sorry, I just can't stop thinking about El." Mike replied, his voice sounding far away. Max stood up from the couch too and stepped over to him.

"She'll be alright. She is really tough." Max said confidently, looking into Mike's eyes. But when she glanced away, Mike swore he heard her whisper to herself, "I could tell." Mike wondered what they could have meant. Unfortunately, his thoughts were interrupted.

The crunching sound of rocks and dirt under tires shattered the quiet atmosphere. Everyone turned to the front of the house. Mike's heart leapt and fell frantically. Was it El? He rushed to the door and flung it open. His heart sank. It wasn't Hopper's truck like he had hoped but Jonathan's car. It was at this moment that everything began to move in slow motion. Nancy was driving and Jonathan was in the passenger seat, both of them looked like they were drenched in sweat. Mike noticed that she had the windows open on this chilly night as she was driving but it hadn't helped much. She stepped out of the car quickly to open the door for Mrs. Byers, who was in the backseat with Will. Jonathan moved just as fast over to the driver's side to get beside his mom and brother. Mrs. Byers was struggling to hold Will in her arms as she stood up from the car. She looked so drained and weak. Jonathan noticed and reached out to lift his brother into his arms and carry him back home. Then they all began to move towards the house, supporting each other as one unit.

Everyone had stepped out of the house now, behind Mike. Seeing Will limp and pale, carried by Jonathan towards the house, Mike's heart felt hollow. Sentences of sorrow rang in his heart- I've lost my best friend, they hadn't saved him, someone truly special was gone.

Steve, who had come onto the porch last, elbowed out past the group and hurried towards them.

"Is Will okay? What happened?" He asked anxiously with a tinge of

fear in his voice, expressing how everyone felt.

"He's alive," Nancy said, her voice straining to speak, "He's free." She sighed and managed a little smile. She looked slightly traumatized but calm. "It was horrible but it's over now."

Mike breathed out a breath he didn't know he had been holding. It sounded like everyone else on the porch did the same. As the returning group reached the top of the porch with Will, Mike's party of friends parted for them. Mike could see as Will passed him in Jonathan's arms, the nearly imperceptible rise and fall of Will's chest. They had saved him. He hadn't lost his best friend. Will was going to be okay.

The Byers made their way inside but Nancy hung back, letting the tiredness hit her body. Steve stepped up beside her and gently started guiding her to the patio couch on the porch under the living room window. He was kind but cautious, not sure if she would accept his help. Nancy didn't seem bothered and collapsed on the bench next to Steve. It must be hard to act differently from the way you're used to acting with someone, Mike thought. Lucas, Max, and Dustin turned to go inside but Mike veered to the other side of the porch to sit on one of the white chairs; being mindful to keep a respectful distance from Nancy and Steve. But not too far as to be out of earshot. Mike was older but not above eavesdropping on his sister. Especially when he still needed a distraction from worrying about Eleven.

Nancy and Steve were quiet for a while, staring down the dark road. Mike could hear the muffled shuffling and banging inside the house as they worked to get Will settled in his room. Occasionally, Jonathan's firm but kind voice would ring out, "Mom-please-relax. I've got it". Mrs. Byers was going to have an even more difficult time not being worried about her son now that he had been possessed. Mike hoped she would rest tonight though. They had been through hell together these past few days and Mike knew that she needed it. Nancy let out a deep sigh, pulling Mike's attention back to the porch. Steve sighed as well and then the silence returned. Mike saw out of the corner of his eye that Steve was fidgeting with his hands, unsure how to start a conversation.

"Steve," Nancy finally began, "thanks for holding down the fort here.



We really needed your help tonight."

"It was no problem. I actually had a fun time watching the little shits." Steve said, trying to sound casual.

"Fun?" Nancy asked, turning her head to look Steve in the face. Unfortunately for Steve, the light from the porch illuminated his puffy black eye and even Mike could see Nancy's eyes widen. "What happened to your eye? It doesn't look like you had fun." The concern in her voice was genuine as Mike knew it always would be.

"I just had a little dust up with Max's douche bag brother. Nothing King Steve couldn't handle." Steve's attempt at sounding tough just wasn't the same and Nancy raised an eyebrow at him. "Ok, Max actually handled it better than me," he conceded, "but I did keep them all safe. I made sure to go with them when they wanted to distract the demo-dogs."

"You WHAT!?" Nancy said, both eyebrows now high on her forehead. Mike cringed at Steve's slip up.

"Never mind, never mind. They are safe and that's all that matters." Steve said quickly, trying to fix it. Luckily for Steve, Nancy just shook her head and sighed, not having the energy to try to dig the information out of him. At least for now. A soft smirk grew on Nancy's face.

"And you still had fun? Wow, you really are a damn good babysitter." Steve chuckled a bit in relief and shrugged. They both turned back to staring at the darkness beyond the porch lights and driveway. There was an awkward silence again.

"And you're ok?" Steve asked, partly out of habit and partly out of concern. Nancy pulled back a bit, slightly surprised.

"Yeah," Nancy replied, glancing down at her hands in her lap, "I am now." She looked up into the night sky and far away into her memory. Mike could see, even from the side, the grief, guilt, and peace flash across her face. There was so much that had happened this last year that she could be thinking about anything but Mike thought he knew who she was remembering.

Steve slowly reached over and took her hand lightly, giving it a comforting squeeze. Nancy blinked back to the present and looked back at Steve. Smiling, she squeezed his hand as a silent thank you.

It was then that the distant sound of tires on gravel met Mike's ears again and he stood up so fast, he almost lost his balance. His heart was instantly racing. He felt the pressure in his chest build as the lights started to appear down the driveway and then, through the darkness, he saw the silhouette of the truck. Hopper's truck. Mike bolted from the porch and nearly jumped all of the front steps to meet it as it parked in front of the Byer's house. Even with the lights of the house, he couldn't see El in the truck, just Hopper in the driver's seat. But when he reached the passenger's side, he saw her slumped down in the seat. Mike's heart spiraled into darkness for a moment as he imagined that El hadn't made it. Finally, he calmed enough to see her chest moving up and down gradually and he realized she was only sleeping. Mike's heart soared and his breathing started returning to normal. By now, Hopper had stepped out of the driver's side and was watching Mike over the hood of the truck, hands in his pockets. A slight smirk played on his face.

"She's ok kid. She did great," Hopper's voice was quiet and proud. He turned to glance over at El inside the truck, his eyes full of love, as he said, "She's exhausted. It took everything she had to save us but she did it." Then he looked back up at Mike, tired but content. "She's been mumbling your name since we left." There was a pause where Mike thought he was going to give him a lecture about treating El right or something but then Hopper just said, "You have five minutes." He turned, leaving the driver's door open. He walked up the porch and into the Byer's house without looking back, leaving Mike outside with El.

He was surprised but didn't have to be told twice. He rushed around and climbed into the driver's side. He didn't shut the door for fear of jolting El awake. He took a moment to really look at her. Even though he had seen her earlier, it had been a brief reunion. This was different. There was no danger looming over them or a room full of people watching them. It was just them. Alone. Even with the sweat on her forehead and the makeup flecking off her face, she looked so beautiful it made his heart beat into his throat. He felt bad about

waking her up, especially after all she had just done to save them.

However, he didn't have to worry because within a few seconds, her eyes started fluttering open as if she felt it was him. Anything is possible with her kind of powers, Mike thought.

"Mike..." She called, her voice raspy but solid. She turned her head towards him and started to try and sit up more.

"No, no..," Mike said gently, "I'm here, don't worry." He felt like he was exploding with love being with her and it flowed out into every syllable. She was with him. They were together again. It felt so comfortable and right but exhilarating all at once.

"How are you feeling?" Mike asked and reached his hand up to her face to brush some stray hair to the side. He couldn't bear to pull his hand back though and left it resting on her cheek which was warm and soft. She tucked her face in closer to his touch and they just sat there for a moment, breathing quietly as one.

"Tired...but better...," She finally broke the silence speaking slowly, "Better now...that you're here...better now that...we are...together." She took deep breaths in between her words but spoke with such feeling Mike's eyes watered.

"I am here. I'm not going anywhere, ever again." Mike reached down and grabbed her hand that she had laying on the arm rest and brought it up to his lips, gently kissing it once and then holding it tight in his. "They can try, but they will never take you away from me again." A smile flickered across El's face and she opened her eyes completely to look directly at him.

"I want you... closer." El managed and made Mike's heart skip frantically. He was amazed any girl felt like this about him. How could a beautiful girl like El look at him like she was right now? He realized he may never know and decided to stop questioning it at this moment. The logistics were fuzzy but Mike managed to gently scoot her over as far as she could go towards the door and then he slid over the counsel, careful not to hit any important levers. It was lucky they were still young enough to be able to both fit side by side before Mike found strength that surprised him to help El scoot back over

onto his lap. Then they both relaxed into each other. Mike felt self conscious at first but pushed it aside and focused on El. She rested her head on his chest and they wrapped their hands together, one of his arms supporting her around her waist. She closed her eyes and let out a sigh of relief, similar to what Mike had done earlier when he realized she was alive. He closed his eyes too and breathed deep of her smell. He hadn't known what she had smelt like before and now it was enough to overwhelm him. He could smell fire, probably from her epic saving-the world moment earlier, but underneath that he also smelt crisp pine trees and just a hint of waffles. The story of her breaking into the grocery store for Ego's made Mike smile wide. Of course, she smelled like waffles.

"What?" El asked, noticing the change somehow.

"I was just thinking about you stealing waffles from the store. Do you remember that?" Mike whispered down to her and felt a smile spread across her face too. She started to chuckle but stopped, wincing.

"Sorry, sorry," Mike said quickly, "Are you ok?"

"I'm fine." El replied calmly, as she stopped wincing and tilted her head back to look up into Mike's face. "Laughing is worth it." It was then, they both paused, looking into each other's eyes. Mike saw her eyes flicker down to his mouth and he was sure she could feel the blood pumping frantically through his body. He leaned down to her lips, feeling nervous but not as unsure as before. She leaned upwards to meet him. Instantly, heat rushed through him as he felt her lips against his and her hand reached up to rake through the side of his hair. The taste of her skin was intoxicating and Mike never wanted it to stop as he felt her body settle heavy into his. Every point of their connection was on fire, pulsing with excitement.

But then it was over. It felt like their kiss lasted forever and no time at all, as El pulled back and sank away. A smile was on her face, but the adrenaline that had filled her veins was passing quickly. Her body needed sleep and Mike knew he wasn't helping.

"I think it's time to let you get some rest." Mike said softly, smiling down at the amazing girl in his arms. She started to shake her head as if to say, "Don't go", but Mike already was responding, "I'll be over

after school tomorrow. So, rest up until then, ok?" El nodded quietly in resignation, already starting to drift in and out of consciousness. Mike leaned down again to lightly press his lips on her cheek before he set to work on unraveling himself.

Conveniently or inconveniently, it was just then that the passenger door swung open and Hopper stood outside. Mike hadn't even noticed him walk up to the truck and had a fleeting fear he had been standing there for a while. Hopper was looking down at them with a raised eyebrow, a face of amusement and what Mike could only describe as "parental concern".

"Times up." He simply said. Then he reached down and lifted El off of Mike so he could exit the truck and lightly placed her back into the seat. She barely noticed as she curled up into a ball to escape the chilly November air that had greeted them. Hopper gently closed the door and started walking back over to the driver's side.

"I'm coming over after school tomorrow." Mike said, suddenly, with a sternness he hadn't planned. Hopper stopped short on the other side of the truck, in front of the open driver door. For a moment, his gaze was frozen on the ground but then he slowly lifted his head back up to look at Mike to say,

"I would have expected nothing less, kid." Then, with a quiet smile, he walked around the door, slid into the truck, and drove away-leaving Mike staring after them. He was glad that Hopper was accepting of him. Although he did think there would probably be a more serious talk in their future, it was enough to be on the same page for tonight.

Mike didn't know how long he had been standing there before his sister Nancy walked up beside him and wrapped her arm around his shoulder.

"Time to go home?" she asked quietly, glancing at Mike with a knowing smile. Mike only nodded, feeling the exhaustion hit his body like a ton of bricks. Nancy guided him back to her car and into the front passenger seat. Just before Mike fell asleep on the ride home, he thought, "Tomorrow is going to be a good day."

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**Note:** One unexpected thing that happened as I wrote this was the mini story of Nancy and Steve. I definitely ship Nancy and Will but my heart loved the idea that Nancy and Steve remain friends and can still have positive, supportive moments after everything they have been through. I hope that the friendship vibe came across well. Thanks for reading!